

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting

Virtual Meeting Conducted Utilizing Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 10, 2021

Members in attendance: Paul Barbato, Debbie Esposito, Mark Brugger, Chris Shamburg, Vikas Jain, Viviana Litovsky, Lonjete Nias, Andrea Moore, Kristy Ritvalsky

Members not in attendance: Patricia White, Lynda Shanahan, Kerri Walsifer, Susan Vandermark

Resource Representatives in attendance: Kelley Michalowski, Eva Scott, Toni Scott, Donna Holzchuh

Resource Representatives not in attendance:

Guests and members of the public: Dominic Rota, Damian Petino, Kim Murray, Chinwe Osondu, Sol Heckelman, Lauren Agoratus, Tatiana Degrosa, Matthew Korobkin

Stakeholders in attendance: Julie Norflus-Good, Sean Murphy, Fred Buglione, Tracy Amerman, Patricia Dowd, Deborah Lynam, Tonya Hardin Santos, Sharon Lohrmann, Gerard Thiers

Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 9:35am.

Acceptance of May Minutes

May minutes were reviewed and were approved unanimously with no corrections.

Office of Special Education Updates

Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director Office of Special Education, discussed the waves of relief funding coming into the Department. The ESSER II grant application will be closing soon. The IDEA grant is now open and available through mid-July. The Division of Student Services hosted a roundtable discussion webinar about year-end activities and plans with 8 presenters. What are schools doing or planning on doing to celebrate the end of the year and the last 15 months of virtual and hybrid learning? Over 120 participants registered and shared ideas. Presenters ranged from Pre-K to High School. Highlights of programs from the Unified Champion Schools, Positive Behavior Support Schools, and School Climate Transformation Project Schools. A good hour of sharing information from all types of schools and all areas of the state. One of the lessons learned is the value of using technology to connect and share ideas across all the school districts in the state.

Dominic Rota, Director of the Office of Special Education Policy and Dispute Resolution stated that the Division and Office continue to respond to stakeholder inquiries regarding the end of the school year and the beginning of ESY.

State Board of Education Update

Kathy Goldenberg, President, highlighted the farewell of Sabrina Kapoli, the State Board student representative from Seneca High School who graduates this year. In the fall, Mara Baker from West Orange High School will become the student representative for the State Board. Next monthly board public business meeting postponed until June 16, 2021. State Board of Education SEL Committee will meet June 23, 2021 to discuss SEL and the projects underway. State Board of Education will elect its leadership team for 2021-2022 at July 14, 2021 meeting.

Presentation

Presentation – Alexis Ziegler, Office of Special Education, 619 Coordinator.

Council Discussion – New Business

Chris Shamburg – Asked about guidance for district SEPAG in response to an inquiring from a parent to SSEAC. Asked if SSEAC could provide framework or resources for districts relating to SEPAG. Debbie Esposito responded that SPAN does provide guidance through a SEPAG Manual and a wealth of information on SPAN’s website. Agrees that SSEAC should do more regarding SEPAG and SEPAGs are going to become more and more important going forward. Debbie discussed how SPEAG is very district specific regarding involvement. Overall parents have become more involved, but how can districts keep families involved? Debbie proposed creating a sub-committee for SEPAG. Chris seconded the motion.

Mark Brugger – S3434 legislation is not signed. If bill is signed, the landscape will change, and parents and students will need guidance. Will DOE provide this guidance? Dominic Rota responded that the DOE will not comment on pending legislation. Can state that parents still retain the right to request compensatory education and can file for mediation or due process if the district does not agree to provide compensatory services.

Old Business

Chris Shamburg – Restraint and Seclusion letter. Vote to approve and send to current commissioner.

Announcements

Debbie Esposito - SPAN Parent Roundtable June 17, 2021.

Public Comment

Public Comments can be submitted to SpEdAdvisoryCouncil@doe.nj.gov.

Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 10:56am.